

Applicants : Gary P. Burns and Matthew R. Dubois
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Remarks:

The remarks presented herein are believed to be fully responsive to the Office Action dated January 23, 2004. Claims 1-24 are pending in the application.

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Applicants mailed an Information Disclosure Statement on March 13, 2002, but did not receive an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449 with the Office Action. Attached is a copy of the previously filed Information Disclosure Statement. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider the information cited in the Statement and return an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449 to confirm the Examiner's consideration of the cited information.

ALLOWABLE CLAIMS

Claims 7 and 23 were indicated as being directed toward allowable subject matter and as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. However, Applicants have not amended these claims because the independent claims are in condition for allowance for the reasons set forth below.

CLAIM REJECTIONS

Claims 1-6, 8-22 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(c) as being anticipated by Tilles, U.S. Patent No. 6,201,203. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(c) for the reasons set forth below.

The present application is a §371 national application of PCT Application No. PCT/EP00/04283, filed May 10, 2000. The PCT application claimed the benefit of U.S. provisional application, Serial No. 60/133,413, filed May 11, 1999. Applicants submit that the PCT application is substantially identical to the provisional application filed May 11,

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1999, such that support for all of the claims of the present application is found in the originally filed provisional application.

Tilles, U.S. Patent No. 6,201,203, was filed May 12, 1999, and was thus filed after the priority date of the present application (May 11, 1999). Therefore, Tilles cannot be considered prior art to this application. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections is thus respectfully requested.

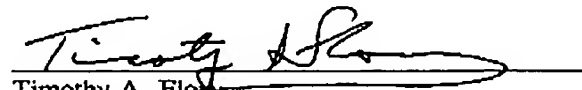
Claims 1-24 remain pending in the application. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-24 are in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is earnestly and respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

GARY P. BURNS ET AL.

By: Van Dyke, Gardner, Linn & Burkhart, LLP

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